

“EUNetHorse: A European project to improve resilience and performance of equine farms in Europe – a focus on socio-economic performance, health, welfare and environmental sustainability.”

Maria João Fradinho^{1,2,3}, Ana Sofia Santos³, Marlene Addes⁴ & Amandine Julien⁴

¹ Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

² CIISA - Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Animal Health, FMV-ULisboa, Portugal

³ FeedInov CoLAB, Estação Zootécnica Nacional, Santarém, Portugal

⁴ Institut Français du Cheval et de l'Équitation, Saumur, France

EUNetHorse is the first European project dedicated to the equine sector funded by Horizon Europe. This thematic network is coordinated by the IFCE (French Horse and Riding Institute) and has the participation of fifteen partners representing nine European countries: France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Poland, Finland and Switzerland. The overall goal of EUNetHorse is to establish an active multi-stakeholder network across the European Union to increase the performance and the resilience of equine farms by widely disseminating best practices, tools and solutions in order to improve their socio-economic performance, the health and welfare of equines, and the environmental sustainability of the sector. This initiative entails the establishment of distinct boards with different roles both at national and European level to ensure the governance of the project. EUNetHorse began in the spring of 2023 and will last four years. During this period, the project will go through five main stages, identical to each partner country: (1) identification of equine farmers' needs; (2) identification of available solutions, gathering of science-based knowledge and understanding of gaps between available knowledge and industry needs; (3) evaluation of solutions and best practices that can be useful to breeders; (4) adaptation of solutions, promoting exchange activities (e.g. workshops, demonstration days, training actions and cross-visits between participating countries); and finally (5) dissemination of solutions. One of the main assets of this project will be maintaining long-term practical knowledge – beyond the project period – by sharing it on the EUFarmbook platform.